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ABSTRACT

The five main issues that are currently confronting vocational educators and policymakers in New Zealand are as follows: participation rates in vocational education and training, the changing role of vocational education and training in secondary schools, new initiatives in light of youth unemployment and transition difficulties, recognition of competence, and responsiveness of the system to the need for change. The labor and skill shortages that were endemic in New Zealand in the past provided even unskilled early school leavers with easy access to employment. Thus, dropout rates were traditionally high and participation rates in continuing education were low. As the country's employment picture changes, however, there is growing awareness of the need for initiatives in vocational education and training, both within the formal education system and at the point of transition from school to work. The country's new ACCESS program is a response to the transition problem. ACCESS is a new system of community-based transition education and training to provide for job seekers who do not choose the traditional options of apprenticeship, further study, or direct entry into the work force. (MN)

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Current Issues in Vocational Education and Training in New Zealand

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Derek E. Wood

Occasional Paper No. 127

THE NATIONAL CENTER
FOR RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1960 KENNY ROAD · COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210

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National Center for Research in Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090

Telephone: (614) 486-3655 or (800) 848-4815

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CURRENT ISSUES IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW ZEALAND

Derek E. Wood
New Zealand Vocational Training Council

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090

1988

FOREWORD

"To ensure that all New Zealanders have the opportunity to practice worthwhile occupations suitable to their capabilities" is the objective of the New Zealand Planning Council. Further, it is recognized by the New Zealand government that firm policy soundly based on equity-based education and training is necessary to bridge the existing skills gap of some people and to develop the full potential of others. It is within this context that the current issues of vocational education and training rest.

Derek Wood is the director of the New Zealand Vocational Training Council in Wellington. He holds an honorary master's degree from Canterbury University and has received training from the Auckland Secondary Teachers College. He has 35 years' experience in the field of education, including the principalship at Naenae College, Lower Hutt, New Zealand, and the head of the department at Burnside High School, Christ Church, New Zealand.

During his career Mr. Wood has gained widespread acclaim in coeducational secondary education, as well innovation with national implications in the fields of guidance, alternative schools, work exploration, credentials of school leavers, multiculturism, and management of educational institutions.

On behalf of The Ohio State University and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, we are pleased to present this seminar paper by Derek Wood.

CURRENT ISSUES IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW ZEALAND

Introduction

In my country, with its pleasant, equable climate; plentiful natural resources; and assured markets in industrial Britain and Europe for its primary produce, there were, until relatively recently, guaranteed jobs for all—permanent residents and new arrivals alike. Stable government, good race relations—compared with the rest of the world—between pakeha white New Zealanders and the Maori people whose arrival preceded them, and the lack of overcrowding—with roughly 3 million people occupying islands that approximate in size to Japan, made New Zealand an attractive place in which to live and settle. Secure in its favored nation position, by 1950 it ranked third on the international index of wealth maintained by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It was still a land of opportunity that basked in the title of "God's own country."

The events of the 1970s burst the prosperity bubble and pitched New Zealand rapidly and unceremoniously into the economic cauldron of change and uncertainty. Three events in particular precipitated the crisis.The entry of Britain into the European Economic Community in 1973 was a signal—not recognized at first—that, unless major changes were made and new markets sought, the whole future of our farming industry, the foundation of our wealth and prosperity, would be threatened. Then came the oil crises. With her almost complete dependence on petroleum imports, New Zealand was very seriously affected by the sharp increases in oil prices during the decade and by the dramatic world wide inflation that accompanied this. For over 100 years New Zealand had been borrowing steadily on the international money market to finance the economic infrastructure on which its prosperity had been built. This indebtedness presented little problem in earlier boom times, however, as oil prices rocketed skywards and export earnings declined dramatically, the cost of debt servicing began to assume alarming proportions. By the mid-1980s more than half of our earnings from exports were being used to service our international debts.

The failure of the New Zealand economy to adjust quickly to these and other changing circumstances and to achieve comparable levels of efficiency and competitiveness with other industrialized countries has led to our present difficult economic position. This has been accompanied by the emergence of large-scale unemployment—by New Zealand standards of around 5 percent—and the departure, especially to Australia, of many young and highly skilled workers to seek their fortunes abroad. Small wonder that by 1984 New Zealand had slumped to 18th place on the OECD economic index.

This was the situation as perceived by the Fourth Labor Government when it took office in July 1984. Since then the New Zealand economy has been turned upside down by the implementation of a free market economy, and, once again, as during the social and economic reforms at the end of last century, the eyes of the world are upon New Zealand. It will be readily appreciate, therefore, that the role of vocational education and training (VET) in labor force adjustment is a live and pressing topic. In this context I have singled out the following five main issues that are currently the subject of debate and inquiry as we seek new policies to meet the challenges that confront us.

1. Participation rates in VET and the need for change
2. A new perspective on the role of VET in the secondary school
3. New initiatives in the light of youth unemployment and transition difficulties
4. Recognition of competence
5. Responsiveness of the system to the need for change

First, to complete the setting of the scene against which these issues must be viewed, a word is necessary about government policy. The Fourth Labor Government has made the improvement of economic productivity and social equity matters of major concern. It sees tertiary education as having a pivotal role to play in this process by contributing to the provision of a skilled work force and ensuring that the available jobs can be distributed equitably among all social groups. Although time will not permit a detailed discussion of social equity issues today, it needs to be understood that they not only underpin the policies of the present government but also underlay all of the activities of the New Zealand Vocational Training Council.

The changing pattern of employment is also a significant factor. Aided by the government's free market policy, in common with other developed countries, the New Zealand economy is moving steadily from its original agricultural base toward one that is increasingly dominated by technology, information, and services (see figure 1, part a). The absorption of the increase in the labor force in the 1960-75 period was in keeping with similar trends overseas. What is of concern is the inability of our present economy to absorb some 31 percent of new entrants to the labor market—(see figure 1, part b) not so much because of lack of opportunities (although this is a contributing factor), but because of lack of relevant skills. Thus, as resources are redirected into more competitive economic sectors from which new job opportunities are expected to flow, there are very clear implications for our labor market and training systems.

	Part A 1960-1975	Part B 1976-1986
Services	79%	55%
Manufacturing	18%	17%
Rural and Mining	3%	2%
Unemployed	3%	31%

Figure 1. New Zealand absorption of increase in labor force

Participation Rates in VET And the Need for Change

Patterns of the Past

School leavers. Labor and skill shortages have been endemic in New Zealand. Easy access to employment—even for the untrained and unskilled—and a ready supply of skilled labor eager to emigrate to New Zealand have combined to produce low participation rates in VET.

Understandably, in these circumstances, the school-leaving age has remained at 15—low by the standards of developed countries. Furthermore, almost two-thirds of school leavers joining the work force do so without any formal vocational education or training (although about one in three of these eventually attend a technical institute). The corresponding figure for unqualified school leavers in small countries like Switzerland, Denmark, and Austria is only 5 percent. Likewise, far fewer of our young people have undertaken trade or middle group occupational training at their point of entry to the work force.

Continuing education. Participation rates in continuing education have also been low (see figure 2). Although direct comparisons with other countries may not always be appropriate because of differing educational structures, they can at least be indicative and provide food for thought. In a recent publication by the Vocational Training Council entitled *Education and the Economy—A Vocational Perspective* (Tetley, Whisker, and Derek 1986), comparative New Zealand figures were superimposed on charts prepared by Chris Hayes, chairman of The Prospect Centre for *Competence and Competition* (published in London, England, in 1984) to draw attention to the unsatisfactory VET participation rates in that country in relation to its main trading competitors. In fact, less than half of our 17-year-olds are in full-time education or training—compared, for instance, with 88 percent in Japan.

Finally, as a proportion of the total population, barely one third of New Zealanders have a recognized qualification by comparison with overseas figures reaching as high as three out of four in the United States for instance.

United States	73
Japan	54
Germany	45
United Kingdom	32
New Zealand (1984)	27

NOTE: Although precise figures are not available the percentage participation in New Zealand is now rising.

Figure 2. Percentage of population 16-24 participating in education (1981)

Changing Attitudes

You will appreciate that, for new initiatives to be effective, widespread attitudinal changes are needed.The Vocational Training Council has been very active in this regard, and the following five of its projects are worthy of note.

1. Early in 1985, the council produced a comprehensive report, Training and Employment, for the Government's Employment Promotion conference, which advanced the case for a cohesive national training policy based on a systematic approach at all levels to support emerging national economic goals.

2. Later that year, it mounted a tripartite mission to Australia to investigate preemployment training. In its unanimously agreed upon report *Training in Australia*, the mission recommended that the government and industry should actively investigate the possibilities offered by systematic postschool training schemes and produced a blueprint of an agenda for action.

3. In 1986, in a discussion paper, "Education and the Economy: A Vocational Perspective," Tetley, Whisker, and Derek highlighted the low participation rates mentioned earlier and advanced the case for the interrelationship between the economic system and the education system (which critics claimed had not been changing quickly enough).

4. Most recently, in March 1987, in a research report on the Training and Retraining Needs of Rural Northland (Pond 1987) that has just been published, the need for a trained work force in this area of high unemployment (14 percent) to support its potential for economic growth has been clearly identified.

5. At the same time, through a wide range of proactive positive action measures the council has been encouraging new thinking toward the employment potential of women, Maoris, and Pacific Island people, amongst parents, employers, trade unions, and the groups themselves.

There is now a growing awareness of the need for change, and a climate is emerging in which all sector groups are ready to respond to and take advantage of new initiatives in VET. These are occurring both within the formal education system and at the point of transition from school to work. We will look at each of these in turn.

A New Perspective on the Role of Vocational Education and Training

In New Zealand a major review of secondary education has just been completed, and we are in the midst of a similar review of tertiary education right now. In both of these reviews the role of VET has assumed considerable importance.

In the March issue of **Centergram**—the National Center's newsletter—in response to a question on the role of vocational education at the secondary level, Dr. Ray Ryan expressed his concern, "that some people would like to force the issue to an either-or situation with postsecondary education." I was certainly in sympathy with his view that this was a "lose-lose situation," and I agree with his perception that both levels are critical. In this regard the situation in New Zealand is very different from America.

Different Perspectives, USA and NZ

With its origins rooted in British education, it is not surprising that traditionally in New Zealand there have been three quite specific separations in the education field between general education, technical education, and training. The former was associated with high schools and universities, whereas technical education, which could be defined as the theory component required for trades and professions, belonged in the technical schools (and later technical institutes) and university specialist schools. On the other hand, training, which provided the actual skills needed on the job, was regarded, in the past at any rate, as the employer's responsibility. Until as late as 1945 these differences were enshrined in the Education Act.

Within the secondary schools the nearest approach to vocational education as it exists in America would have been the trade skills courses in our former, but no longer existent, technical schools. These equipped young people to leave at 15 years of age after 2 years of secondary schooling and enter a trade as an indentured apprentice—probably for 8,000 or 10,000 hours. Although it is true that New Zealand secondary schools teach such subjects as home economics, typewriting and economics, engineering shopwork and woodwork, and horticulture, they do not have the focus of providing employment-related instruction in preparation for employment as in this country. Their mission is to provide a broadening experience and a range of options within a general educational framework rather than to provide a skilled work force for society.

The Vocational Versus Academic Argument

The secondary school curriculum has been as much an issue in New Zealand in recent years as it has been in America—but with a significant difference. The bulk of the reports published in this country in the early 1980s appear to have concentrated their attention on the 20-30 percent of young people who go on to the university, whereas some 80 percent of jobs do not require a college degree. Concern with this approach was highlighted by the statement in the introduction to *The Unfinished Agenda* (National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education 1984) that the assumption is that more academics, which may be the best preparation for college, is also the best preparation for life. The assumption is wrong.

In New Zealand, on the other hand, there has been a growing concern that our senior secondary school curriculum has been over dominated by the requirements of a national university entrance examination that failed to recognize the needs of the increasing numbers of students remaining at high school for a fourth or fifth year and for whom, as in this country, university study was simply not an option they wished or needed to consider. Recognizing that the role of vocational education in preparing young people for adult life and employment was an important issue, the Vocational Training Council published a Discussion Paper on the subject in 1985 that incorporated an international perspective.

This discussion paper was timely as the university entrance examination was abolished at the end of that school year as part of the mandate of the Labor Government. The way was now opened for much more innovation through the internally assessed Sixth Form Certificate, which became the sole award at the end of 4 years of secondary education. With its much wider terms of reference, it lends itself naturally to the introduction of vocational education as a preparation for entry to the work force or as a bridge to further related education and training at a technical institute.

In this less academically pressured environment subjects such as computer studies, business studies, and workshop technology are gaining in popularity, and a working party has just been established to examine the potential of education for entrepreneurship at this and other levels. At

the same time new LINK programs are being established to allow secondary school students to undertake some vocational studies in neighboring technical institutes. Opportunities for work experience for students are also now available in most secondary schools. More schools are recognizing the importance of meaningful leaving references for their students that highlight basic skills and competencies—whether in the academic, practical, or interpersonal areas—in preference to providing a list of grades and examination successes.

Thus, although your preoccupation appears to have been to inject components of a general education into vocational education and so broaden its base, ours is to promote the importance of a vocational perspective within a general education. So, from opposite ends of the same curriculum continuum we are both addressing the need for schools to help all students achieve intellectual, social, personal, and vocational goals.

I guess, in each of our countries, time alone will tell the extent to which the proponents of the vocational dimension have been successful in gaining their objectives.

New Initiatives in the Light of Youth Unemployment and Transition Difficulties

A New Phenomenon

Youth unemployment was such a new phenomenon in the late 1970s that many believed it was a short-term problem that would soon resolve itself. An increased education vote was not seen as a solution by the government of the day because education had not proved to be the panacea that had been expected in the previous decade. Given these attitudes, the problem was addressed in a series of ad hoc approaches (with only limited emphasis on training) that were seen by many as palliatives for the unemployed.

However, the message has gradually become clear that there will be no short-term solution, and the present government was elected on a promise that it "would give priority to the continuing education of young people who have left school with inadequate qualifications and skills and are not receiving further educational training in their present jobs."

ACCESS

The most significant development in this area has been the introduction of the ACCESS program. This is a new system of community-based transition education and training to provide for job seekers who do not choose the traditional options of apprenticeship, tertiary study, or direct entry to the work force. In some 20 local areas, Regional Employment and ACCESS Councils (REACS) will determine what type of training is required and who should provide it. It is intended that ACCESS will provide a wide range of both work-related and personal skills, including basic literacy and numeracy, job search techniques, life skills, and self-confidence.

Initially ACCESS is targeted toward school leavers, people with a history of unemployment, and Maori people—particularly young Maori people. In fact, in an attempt to recognize the unacceptably high rate of unemployment and the particular needs of the latter group, who claim that the pakeha education system has failed them, 20 percent of ACCESS funding has been set aside to be administered by Maoris for Maoris. The Maori ACCESS program began in January 1987, and much of it is based on rural and urban maraes (or tribal cultural centers) and includes maoritanga (the feeling of "being Maori"), which an indigenous people are in danger of losing in a bicultural society.

ACCESS represents a bold bid by the government to tackle the transition problem. On the eve of my departure the Minister of Employment announced a new financial package that will almost treble the number of training places available this year. In making his announcement it is significant to note that he also said, "The sanction of taking away the unemployment benefit is acceptable and proper—provided you can offer a person a suitable job or training programme." Apart from the issues of social policy that this statement raises, the introduction of ACCESS has brought into sharp focus a number of other issues that have been lurking near the surface for the past decade. Two in particular need comment.

Who pays? In common with other countries facing difficult economic times, there are different pressures to shift the burden of costs from one group to another. In the area of training, the parties affected are the government, employers, and trainees. By means of ACCESS in particular the government is accepting the initial cost of preparing people for the labor market through the teaching of basic vocational and employability skills. In times of full employment, this cost was borne by employers. Of course it raises another question as to whether, through the education system that is already funded out of taxation, there is a satisfactory return on the investment. Some of the purpose of present reviews is to ensure that young people leave the formal education system better prepared to enter the work force—perhaps without the need for special transition programs such as ACCESS.

It is also argued that the delayed entry of young people into the paid work force places an increased financial burden on them and often their families. This in turn raises questions of disadvantage and social equity and the concern that socioeconomic advantage or disadvantage tends to be self-perpetuating, leading possibly to a society of "haves" and "have nots," which is the antithesis of the traditional egalitarian society in New Zealand.

Ultimately, the question that must be answered is how to turn training from a cost into an investment and how to distribute fairly the financial aspects of that investment. This is as much a question of social as of economic policy and also relates closely to the question of equity.

Equity. Traditionally the better qualified had a better earning potential over a working lifetime and were thus willing to forgo high initial wages in anticipation of future benefits. The post-World War II years of serious labor shortage certainly threatened this concept in New Zealand, so much so that many young people chose direct entry to the work force, frequently at adult pay rates, in preference to further education or even to formal training in apprenticeship. The influences were even felt in this area where, today, first-year apprentices in general receive about 50 percent of a skilled tradesperson's wage.

Now young people are faced with four options: adult wages in unskilled or semi skilled work if available (approximately $200 per week), apprenticeship (again, if available at a starting rate of around $130-$150 per week), a training allowance in ACCESS (equal to the unemployment rate plus 10 percent, currently $103 per week), or a Tertiary Assistant Grant of $41 per week.

The Vocational Training Council believes that the system of financial support needs to establish a correct balance between giving extra help to the most needy and seeing that all who want to go on to further study or training can get sufficient financial help to enable them to do so. With a limited budget, this policy will require some hard decisions in the allocation of resources if it is to receive a high priority.

Alternative trade training. Changes have also been introduced into formal training programs. Until six months ago trade and technician training required concurrent work experience so that—in theory at least—on and off job training took place in tandem. Starting this year the government has introduced pilot alternative trade training courses in four technical institutes. These 2-year courses are designed to produce graduates with skills equivalent to those gained by apprentices after having served 3- or 4-year contracts. This development has raised a further issue with potentially serious industrial relations implications. The Federation of Labor sees it as a threat to opportunities to direct entry to apprenticeship and also as the imposition of a premium on training by transferring costs previously borne by employers to trainees. Understandably, employers have a different perspective and see the potential for new staff to be more immediately productive with obvious cost savings provided, of course, that the required level of competence is achieved.

Apprenticeship reform. Using the DACUM approach to training needs analysis, the Vocational Training Council has been working with national apprenticeship committees to reform traditional apprenticeship training with the goal of reducing training time where possible. In this regard a very significant aspect of our work has been the creation of a supportive climate for reform through the comprehensive involvement of individual industries in the validation of the findings of the DACUM conferences. However, this work has raised the issue of the respective responsibilities of industry groups, training providers, and examining authorities in the whole area of curriculum development. The debate has been long and robust, but a useful process has resulted from it that provides for a logical and systematic approach.

Recognition of Competence

Three issues to which I have already referred have combined to concentrate attention on qualifications and awards:

- The changing nature of the awards structure in our secondary schools
- The need for recognition, at the point of transition, for skills gained under the new ACCESS programs
- The need, in general, for a more flexible and adaptable work force

Those are being addressed in the government's present review of tertiary education.

Present Concerns

With our small highly mobile population of barely 3.5 million, the need for qualifications to be nationally recognized—whether from secondary school or from trade or professional training—is of great importance. In this regard, traditionally, we have placed much faith in formal external examinations conducted by independent examining authorities. Thus, at secondary school level, the moderation of the Sixth Form Certificate is based on external examination results from the end of the previous school year. However there are also plans to abolish this examination. Now, the fear amongst many parents, employers, and unions alike is that, without an acceptable moderation procedure, the school that pupils attend rather than the qualifications they hold will determine their chances in the labor market.

At the point of transition there is widespread concern to ensure that the skills and competencies gained in ACCESS are adequately evaluated and recognized so that they will give trainees proper recognition in the labor market and, where appropriate, credit towards other

formal qualifications. As you no doubt know, this has been an important issue with the Youth Training Scheme in Britain. It is one we must now resolve, and resolve quickly.

Within the established work force there is growing pressure from educationalists for the right to issue local certificates—nationally validated if this is seen as appropriate. There is also concern that existing arrangements—vested largely in two independent statutory bodies dealing respectively with trade and technician (or middle group) training are too restrictive and inflexible in an age where rapid technological changes require rapid responses from the training system. There is growing acceptance that a more flexible approach to the recognition of competence will be necessary for the future.

Possible Developments

Although the localization of qualifications is obviously one option, there is also considerable interest in the concept of a single, modular, national certificate as has been developed in Scotland. It is believed by some that such a development would improve and simplify opportunities for cross-crediting qualifications and would more easily enable new competencies to be gained and added to existing credentials. It has the further advantage of allowing rapid response to change as whole qualifications do not need to be revised and restructured. Additionally, such a system could link secondary and tertiary qualifications together as parts of the same continuum.

There are also dangers in such an approach. Trade unions have pointed out the possibility of deskilling and the undesirability of people with minimum competencies setting themselves up in opposition to fully qualified tradespeople. They also see the possibility of reduced margins for skill being paid by employers who may only give recognition for a much narrower skill range to suit specific requirements. Clearly the industrial relations implications would need to be tackled at an early stage and agreements reached on the correct approach to skill recognition.

Because of the possibilities offered by such an approach, the Vocational Training Council, in cooperation with the departments of Education and Labor, has recently brought to New Zealand the chief executive of SCOTVEC (the Scottish Vocational Education Council). His lecture tour describing the philosophy behind the 16+ Action Plan and the way it has been implemented has aroused considerable interest. Each of the module descriptors in the Scottish system spells out clearly the expected outcomes in terms of competencies to be gained. Assessment is thus a relatively straight forward matter with criterion referencing replacing the norm referencing that currently dominates our assessment systems. But, a stringent validation system is obviously needed to maintain standards, and this has been established in Scotland. Given the current Tertiary Education Review, Tom McCool's visit was most timely and may have a significant influence on future directions. I hope it will lead us toward the possibility of a flexible and adaptable system of recognition of competence that will meet the needs of the future.

Responsiveness of the System to the Need for Change

Present Constraints

There are three major constraints on the effective operation of any society. I have already described the economic constraints that are certainly influencing our present performance. Because of the force of socialization and the strength of social expectations and control, social constraints, such as issues of equity, although not necessarily expressed in law or institutional procedures, can be no less constraining.

However, although measures are taken to deal both with social and economic issues, these on their own will not be enough to accomplish the required adjustments to the labor market in New Zealand. It is also necessary to address institutional restraints that, often unwittingly and unintentionally, interfere with the smooth and effective functioning of the VET system.

The various elements of the vocational education and training system in New Zealand have developed independently over a long period to meet different needs as they have been separately identified. This has been acceptable in the past, when training was normally regarded as preparation for a lifetime in the same occupation. Indeed, our training systems have gained international recognition for the quality of New Zealand technicians and tradespeople. Understandably, in these circumstances, there is a reluctance to change.

Future Needs

Increasingly, however, the need for flexibility, adaptability, and frequent retraining throughout the working life is being recognized. Although we do not have to cope with the complexities of a federal system we do have a VET system that includes a multiplicity of statutory bodies with ill-defined interrelationships and many functions that are overlapping, missing, or ineffectively performed. We are currently preoccupied with the removal of institutional constraints and the establishment of a more effective and responsive VET system. This, in turn, raises a series of new issues.

What, for instance, should be the relationship between regional and national interests? What should the industry input into the VET system be and how can this input be recognized and safeguarded? Who should pay for what, and what are appropriate funding mechanisms for different parts of the system? And so on. You will recognize that, in one shape or another, many of these themes have recurred during this presentation.

I am sure that I am on familiar ground because it is my experience that these are issues of international concern. In their starkest terms they probably resolve themselves into the dichotomy between the labor market and the educationalists. The former are sometimes seen as too pragmatic and driven only by the economic imperative and the latter as too idealistic and lacking in realism and a sense of urgency. Neither perspective is accurate, but each contains elements of truth and helps to determine the actions and reaction of the other. Within government infrastructures they tend to be supported respectively by the departments of Labor, Employment, or Industrial Relations on one hand and by the departments of Education and Science on the other.

A number of countries have established different tripartite mechanisms to resolve these difficulties—with varying degrees of success. In New Zealand, the Vocational Training Council is currently the tripastate body charged with the responsibility of developing policy advice to the Government in these areas of future needs.

These are the issues with which we are currently grappling as we endeavor to remove institutional constraints and make our VET system more responsive to the need for change. How successful we will be remains to be seen. But I believe that many of the problems have been identified and much of the groundwork done to prepare for the necessary changes of attitude that must accompany reform. Faced with an election at the end of its triennium, in September of this year, it is difficult to estimate at this stage either how quickly the government will move to effect changes or which of the many pressure groups will be most successful in advancing its claims for a share in the ownership of the system. However, it will be only a matter of time before the reforms are put in place—and then the equally difficult task of managing the changes will begin.

Conclusion

In its recently published report, *Social Policy Option* (Davey 1987), the New Zealand Planning Council has suggested that one of our social objectives could well be

> to ensure that all New Zealanders have the opportunity to practise worthwhile occupations suitable to their capabilities.

Such an objective requires that full employment must remain an important goal for society. In our society, as in yours, work is the chief determinant of social status with paid work still having a higher value placed on it than unpaid work. Work, in the sense of purposeful activity, is basic to mental health and central to human well-being and the quality of life.

By taking a proactive role in the projects referred to in this paper, the New Zealand Vocational Training Council has given a strong lead in promoting the attitudinal changes that are necessary for future success. The present government has realized that a firm policy is needed that is soundly based on the promotion of economic growth supported by equity-based education and training policies that bridge the existing skills gap by developing the full potential of all New Zealanders—women and men, Maori, Pakeha, and Pacific Islander alike.

Given the rapidity of technological and economic change and the persistent demand for new skills and a more flexible work force, the corollary to a policy of full employment must be one that provides open access to ongoing education and training for all.

This is the broad context in which we must set the current issues in vocational education and training in New Zealand. The challenge that faces us is to resolve them in such a way as to secure both the economic and social objectives in a manner that wins acceptance and support from all sections of the nation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Derek E. Wood

Question: In this country and in the United Kingdom, alternative training institutions or brokering systems have been established under the Job Training Partnership Act and the Youth Training Scheme. Has New Zealand moved in that direction at all, and if it has what is the relationship with this alternative delivery system to the educational system?

Yes, we are moving in that direction, and the ACCESS program is really a step towards it. I remember being told in England that if it hadn't been for youth unemployment, YTS would never had gotten established. Now that it is, they want to make it into something that provides a permanent bridge between school and work. I would think that ACCESS is quite likely going to do that in New Zealand, but there is going to be very great pressure on the secondary schools to insure that the return on the investment there is improved so that ACCESS is less necessary. You could argue that if the schools were doing the job that people say they should be doing, there would be no need for an ACCESS program or a transition program because young people would be ready to make the transition. Now that is a very simplistic answer as we all know. If we had the resources to reduce the staff/student ratio and do all the other things needed, we could do what is required. After you examine all these transition programs, the trainer/student ratio is much smaller than it is in a secondary class. So, in New Zealand there are some tensions between the secondary service and the alternative training institutions. They are demonstrated at the governmental level between the Labor Department, which is responsible for the training programs of young people who have dropped out of school, and the Education Department. They are both competing for the same government dollar to provide the resources that are necessary to train or to educate the young people.

Question: I read a book in the 1970s by a woman in New Zealand who initiated revolutionary ways of teaching. It suggested some of the same concerns in our country in recent years regarding the issues of learning style and teaching style. Can you explain about your allusion to the European system of education not proving to help the indigenous Maori people?

I think you will be referring to the work of Sylvia Ashton Warner who became a household name in educational circles in New Zealand. Her two books, *Spinster* and *Teachers* discussed her teaching among Maori youngsters.

To understand the present reasons for Maori dissatisfaction with the education system we first need to look back in history. In New Zealand in the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of this century, we were really following an assimilation policy based on European traditions and culture. We were really going to turn Maori people into browned-skinned Europeans. We now have the Maori nationalist movement that is saying, "We are Maori, we are different, we have our own culture, and it is important, and, in fact, if we lose our own culture we are nothing." What happens is that when Maori people move to the cities away from their tribal origins and their Maori base,

they tend to lose their culture. In recent years there has been a great move to reinforce their culture. It has been happening in the Maori language nests (or child care centers) in which no language is spoken but Maori. These Maori children are coming into the school system now from a Maori cultural base. This program has been in effect for about 4 years now. It is growing, and I believe it is going to have a very important impact in the future. A colleague of mine, a principal of a secondary school, was in charge of one of the first schools to introduce Maori language as an optional subject. He found that, within two or three years, Maori youngsters improved rapidly in academic subjects because they felt increased self-confidence in themselves.

We have a movement in New Zealand called "Tu Tangate." Translated into English it, means "stand tall" and is an encouragement to young Maori people to claim their culture. I believe this movement will be successful, but there will be tensions in the process. The Maori people will be seen as competitors for the same resources as the lower socioeconomic Europeans who tend to find themselves in a similar situation and who complain that Maoris are getting preferential treatment. Twenty percent of the money from the ACCESS program has been given to the Maori people. They have established their own Maori Board to administer it and to educate and train young Maori dropouts. These are some of the ways in which the concerns of the indigenous Maori people, that "the system" has failed them, are being met.

Question: In the United States, due to some recent changes that have affected our economy, such as growing international competition and technology, some economists are telling us that we are developing too much of a polarized social structure. Professionally trained individuals earning fairly high salaries are at one extreme and at the other extreme, a very, very large population finding occupational employment at lower levels, fewer career opportunities, and the great middle class disappearing with the demise of the smokestack industries. Is that type of a transition taking place in New Zealand, and if so how are you planning to cope with it?

I don't believe it is noticeable enough to be causing concern yet although the possibilities are recognized. It is certainly not peculiar to the United States. People in many developed countries see this as one of the potential problems. It implies, as you suggest, the virtual deskilling of a large part of the population and the creation of primary and secondary labor markets—the former in which the well-educated professional has safeguards and career prospects and the latter where the rest of the labor force tends to become transitional part-time and so on.

At the moment we see a slight decline in the overall size of our work force, but a very definite increase in the part-time work force. The question has been raised as to whether that part-time work force, which is mainly female, is choosing to work parttime for preference or is it because that is the only work they can get? With our move towards a deregulated economy and the removal of restrictions on trading hours I suspect it is rather more of the latter and that, in the servicing sector at least, this is liable to increase. I believe that it is a problem that most advanced countries are going to have to grapple with, and I don't think there is going to be an easy solution. A number of us who are at the policy advisory level are certainly aware of the problem and the possible solutions.

What we are tending to find in a number of industries, and certainly in the information technology industries, is that new career opportunities are being created. For instance, a young woman who starts with keyboard skills and secretarial skills, providing she is given encouragement and opportunities, can move into management. That certainly would not have been true a few years ago. But part of the problem with the information and high-tech industry is that such a young and immature industry in our country hasn't actually faced the real issues of staff career

development and growth. It tends to hire people instantly for the jobs that exist now and is quite prepared to discard these people tomorrow if those jobs are changed. The Vocational Training Council has an Information Technology Training Committee (ITTC) that is addressing this problem and trying to establish what the training needs are in the information technology field. To date it has had considerable success.

Also on the positive side—provided we return to economic stability and full employment and provided our recognition of skills becomes more flexible and people embrace the concept of continuing education and training throughout their working lives—there are many who would see advantages in a reduced working week or in the chance to take "time out" from paid employment. But given the complexity and challenge of our present problems that may just be wishful thinking—or perhaps a possibility for a 21st century utopia!

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